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ABSTRACT

A project followed the development of a curriculum of editing assignments used to bridge the gap between Miami-Dade Community College students' passive command of grammatical rules and active use of them in their writing. Assumptions and strategies used in developing the curriculum included: (1) the idea that editing must be seen as a part of the writing process but must not be allowed to constrain fluency; (2) a focus on one type of grammatical error at a time so as to minimize confusion for second-language or second-dialect speakers; and (3) incorporation of errors from actual student writing as examples. After a pilot study in which 95% of the 450 students participating attested to the effectiveness of the editing curriculum, a classroom research project was undertaken. Results indicated that the editing approach promoted grammatical accuracy in writing better than a traditional lecture and grammar drill approach. Implications for teachers and curriculum developers include the fact that editing assignments are not a cure-all for grammar deficiencies but should be used in conjunction with sustained writing practice and reading assignments and that all varieties of English should be presented as useful and appropriate for different contexts. (Two tables of data are included, and one page of references is attached.) (MHC)

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A PEDAGOGICALLY SOUND APPROACH TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDITING MATERIALS

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Developmental educators have noted the difficulty of promoting students' positive transfer of grammatical rules to writing. Miami-Dade Community College, North Campus has developed and tested materials that attempt to bridge the gap between passive knowledge of grammatical rules and their active use in writing, through a pedagogically sound approach to editing. The methodology, results, implications and practical applications of this project will be discussed.

BACKGROUND

In January 1984, Florida legislators issued a mandate to all college preparatory programs in the state: to provide double-contact hours of instruction to all college preparatory students. No special funds were awarded to community colleges for undertaking this task. Miami-Dade Community College, North Campus, met this challenge by setting up a laboratory geared toward developing students' basic skills. This lab serves approximately 950 students per semester in the area of writing.

After various short term arrangements, the writing faculty saw the need to invest some time and funds for devising a curriculum that would be appropriate for this laboratory setting and student population.[1] No existing materials were found to be

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[1]The North Campus developmental writing program serves approximately 2500 students per year. Students are required to take developmental writing if they score 29 or below on the objective portion of the MAPS entrance examination. The majority of students are second language or second dialect.

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suitable for delivery to such a large number of developmental students (approximately 75 writing students per hour) with minimal instructional assistance available. At the same time, faculty saw the need to develop materials that would effectively reinforce classroom instruction and would contribute to the improvement of students' writing skills.

The results of a questionnaire dated November 1985 indicated the faculty's support for the development of editing assignments. These were selected over other alternatives such as grammar drills, vocabulary exercises, writing assignments or summaries of reading selections. The faculty's choice was prompted largely by a concern with the difficulty of promoting the transfer of students' passive command of standard grammatical forms (as evidenced in grammar exercises, quizzes, drills, etc.) to active use of these structures in writing compositions.

I. Development Phase

Three individuals representing the three departments within the Communication Division worked under a grant to develop these editing assignments. Students would work on each assignment once a week for approximately one hour in the laboratory. The results of the objective portions would be scored by computer and returned to the classroom instructors. The writing portions would be returned to instructors for scoring and feedback to students. Skills to be covered in each assignment were arrived at via error analysis of 150 student papers at two different levels.

A pilot study was conducted to test the material before large scale implementation. Four writing classes were asked to participate. The material was administered and computer reports including item analysis, item discrimination and differentiation indexes were generated. Based on the results of this pilot study and on periodic feedback from students and faculty, revisions were undertaken and the materials were finally compiled into two editing workbooks. With this, the material development phase of the project was completed in August 1987.

The materials were later evaluated through periodic faculty and student surveys and further revisions were undertaken. In addition, a classroom research project[2] was undertaken by cur-

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[2]Classroom research here is differentiated from formal educational research approaches. The term is used as defined by Cross and Angelo in Assessing Learning in the Classroom. (1987). Results apply to a particular group of students and not to a universal population parameter. No generalizations about universal strategies of learning are being made.

riculum developers in order to test the effectiveness of the editing approach in students' application of grammatical rules to writing tasks.

A. RELEVANT RESEARCH

Since the goal of the project was to develop editing assignments that would help promote positive transfer of grammatical skills to writing, curriculum developers consulted previous research on language and writing instruction as it pertained to this question. The following is a summary list of the general principles found in the literature:

1. As Krashen (1984) states, two basic problems for writers in any context are the following:

   A. lack of acquisition of the code (standard written English)
   B. a poor or ineffective composing process

Some researchers like Krashen claim that the answer to (A) is lots of comprehensible input such as reading, especially for pleasure. For problem (B), teaching, conscious learning and practice come into play. Whereas reading builds competence, teaching can show the learner some performance strategies to alleviate the learners' deficiencies.

2. Researchers have found that there is one part of the learner's internal system that appears to be responsible for the conscious learning of grammatical rules and their application in revising writing. Krashen (1982) calls this part the **monitor** of output. This **monitor** is encouraged to operate in tasks which cause learners to focus on conscious linguistic analysis (i.e., grammar drills, exercises, tests) while communicative tasks such as speech or writing compositions do not encourage the use of the monitor because the learner is mostly focused on communicating meaning, and not on refining form.

3. Several studies have indicated that proficient readers and writers are more likely to be **optimal monitor users**. They **consciously** use strategies such as **re-reading, pausing** while composing, **monitoring,** and **reflecting** over their text (Birnbaum 1982). Ryan (1984) has found that proficient writers use several strategies some of which include **structuring or monitoring** and **repairing or revising.** Gordon and Braun (1986) assessed two groups of students and found that they viewed revising their writing as editing **both** for **clarity of meaning** and for **grammar and mechanics.**

4. The application of conscious learning, rules and form from the monitor or editor is the last thing done in writing. If applied too early, it can stifle the discovery of ideas during

the composing process, in which the writer focuses more on meaning than on form. The monitor should be ignored while rewording, rearranging and brainstorming and should be applied at the end to correct grammar, spelling and mechanics (Krashen 1984).

5. When students focus on form, that is, when they are asked to check their work for mechanics, their grammatical accuracy seems to improve (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). Asking students to edit seems to have the effect of focusing their attention on the more non-communicative aspects of the task. However, a single experience of editing may not be sufficient for students to internalize transferrable skills (O'Donnel, Larson, Dansereau, and Rocklin, 1986).

6. The linguistic domain of the monitor is limited to level rules of the language, those that are easy to conceptualize and do not require mental gymnastics. Therefore, the errors most likely to be self-correctable are those involving bound morphology or word endings. Ross (1982) states that second-language writers in particular can assimilate only a small portion of corrective feedback into their current grammatical system, especially when the corrections involve more complex and problematic aspects of word order and syntax. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) have also stated that implicit or unconscious learning obtained by input (reading, copying, television) is more effective than conscious monitoring of rules when complex syntactical patterns are involved.

7. Learners will retain feedback and apply it only if they are forced to approach error correction as a problem-solving activity. Asking students to revise their compositions rather than to copy a composition already edited by a teacher seems to be more effective in promoting positive transfer of grammatical skills. Practicing editing errors made by students in previous years or semesters also seems beneficial (Robb, Ross and Shortreed, 1986).

8. There is some counterevidence to the claim that error-correction causes writers to be overly concerned with surface structure to the extent that fluent writing is constrained. When used concurrently with sustained writing practice, editing does not seem to stifle fluency in any significant way (Robb, Ross and Shortreed, 1986). As a matter of fact, Eskey (1983) suggests that if students are in need of some form of corrective feedback in grammatical skills, focus on form is justified.

9. Friedmann points out the importance of presenting one skill at a time in order to avoid confusion and to structure exercises in the form of short, organized essays or compositions (1983).

B. DEVELOPERS' ASSUMPTIONS

The general principles and research data summarized above led curriculum developers to generate the following assumptions regarding the development of editing materials:

1. The primary difficulty with application of grammatical rules to writing lies in the inherent difference between grammar drills which promote conscious linguistic analysis and the writing assignments which focus primarily on communication.

2. The way to bridge this gap may be to show developmental students how editing (self-correction of grammatical errors) is a part of the writing process that occurs at the end, after all ideas are expressed and checked for communicative effectiveness and to give developmental students sustained and orderly practice in editing grammatical errors that resemble their own as much as possible.

3. Editing may provide developmental students with a means of increasing self-awareness as writers and more realistic ways of assessing their writing skills. It can provide students with a cognitive framework that lets them experience first hand that their writing errors are correctable, that they occur in discernible patterns. Being that editing is a strategy that proficient writers are conscious of using, it seems a desirable goal to promote in developmental students.

4. The grammatical rules presented in these editing materials should be simple and portable. There should be a minimum of terminology used and the skills should be presented one at a time.

5. While we believe in some researchers' assertions (Friedmann 1983) regarding the confusion caused by error-based exercises, we feel that grammar drills based only on linguistic manipulation (without communicative intent) continue to leave a wide gap between these activities and the skills needed to monitor one's own output in a communicative task such as a composition or essay. It has been our experience that developmental students can very easily fill in many pages of grammatical exercises and do very well while being unable to transfer many of these skills to their writing. Self-correction of grammatical errors must be given a place in the communicative process itself and students must be given sustained and orderly practice in acquiring this skill.

Criticism regarding editing, is based on the behavioristic point of view that students will, through a habit established by sustained practice in grammar drills, begin to produce the standard forms in writing without having to edit any errors. We do not believe this to be a realistic or sound perception of

the writing process or of the learners' internal system. Students may, first, not perceive any connection between these drills and the writing process. Secondly, classroom drills can never promote stronger habits of production than those the student already has, especially when he/she is a second-language or second-dialet speaker. When the student is in a communicative situation, he/she will produce the forms which are part of his/her every day use of the language: for example vernacular English forms. In the case of a second-language speaker, this is further complicated by the degree of fossilization (systematic deviations from the standard or non-native forms) which are fixed in that learner's inter-language. Assuming that these errors will forever disappear from the learner's output is unlikely. What the learner needs is a strategy by which to **monitor** his/her output in order to increase his/her grammatical accuracy during writing tasks.

C. STRATEGIES

In order to give these editing materials an approach consistent with the latest language research, and in order to promote optimum use of the monitor in student writing, the following techniques were incorporated into their development:

1. The editing tasks moved from linguistic manipulation such as completion and multiple choice editing to more communicative tasks such as editing an unmarked passage and topics for writing that would elicit the particular grammatical skill covered.

2. Short, self-contained chapters or units were developed, focusing on one grammatical skill (error) at a time. The skills presented built systematically on one another; the editing assignments focused on one type of error at a time with review points along the way. Care was taken to avoid some of the editing presentations in textbooks which ask students to correct all different types of errors, which mostly leads to confusion and frustration.

3. The chapters provided short grammatical explanations with a minimum of terminology followed by charts which provided orderly summary of simple, portable rules as well as many different examples.

4. An error analysis of approximately 75 papers per level (College Preparatory Writing I and II) was conducted in order to ascertain the frequency and types of errors present in actual student writing and to incorporate these into the overall design by using them as examples.

5. An introduction placing editing as part of the writing process which takes place at the end, after all ideas are expressed and double-checked for accuracy and clarity, was

provided along with practice in using several genaral proof-reading techniques. The introduction also emphasized some qualities of good writing that go beyond grammatical accuracy in order to insure that one of the possible dangers of editing, a tendency to become "worried sick" over errors, does not stifle students at this level. It also familiarized the student with the differences between speaking informally and writing so that students do not feel that their vernacular or every day language is inherently defective but rather that it is appropriate for certain occassions and circumstances, while standard usage is essential for more formal occassions such as college writing.

6. The students were not asked to edit passages for paragraph development or clarity. It was thought more useful to provide good samples of paragraph development and clarity as input to students. Editing unmarked passages would therefore serve to reinforce other important skills such as reading comprehension, and copying accurately.

7. All nonstandard examples presented in the various paragraphs or in isolation were taken from student papers. No "invented" errors were included, thus maximizing student identification with the material.

8. The danger of reinforcing nonstandard usage was minimized by first providing examples of standard usage as input, then nonstandard examples as errors, accompanied by an explanation of how to recognize and eliminate these, then followed by the "corrected" standard usage once again. In this way, standard examples were doubly reinforced.

9. Computers were used for scoring all multiple choice items and for providing feedback on item analysis. This proved to be cost effective and very useful for further revision of the material.

II. Evaluation Procedure

A pilot study was set up to test the material before large scale implementation. Four writing classes were asked to participate. The material was administered and computer reports including item analysis and item discrimination and differentiation indexes were generated. Revision of the material was undertaken.

In addition, a survey was conducted at the end of the pilot study in order to determine whether the material was perceived as useful and relevant by students and faculty and whether faculty found the material easy to use and incorporate into classroom activities or assignments. Of 450 students surveyed, 95% found the material generally helpful, clear, appropriate in length, pleasant and worthwhile. Faculty also found the material

suitable and useful for developmental students.

The third phase of the evaluation procedure consisted of the following classroom research project.

A. CLASSROOM RESEARCH PROJECT

To test the effectiveness of editing in students' application of grammatical forms to writing, curriculum developers decided to develop a classroom research project. Classroom research is an approach by which the classroom instructor employs strategies or techniques which inform him/her of what students are learning and how well they are learning it (Cross and Angelo, 1987). This approach was chosen over more formal educational research techniques because emphasis was placed on the specific student group at North Campus and not on a universal population parameter. In addition, classroom research provided an immediate and direct connection between research findings and classroom instruction.

The project consisted of an error analysis to determine the morphology or word ending error which occurred with similar or equal frequency in two randomly selected classes. Noun plural markers were found to fit the criteria.

Table 1: Error Analysis
Skill: Noun Plurals

	GROUP 1	GROUP 2
Total # of instances	71	105
Average # of correct instances per paper	4	5
Average # of incorrect instances per paper	7	9

Once the skill to be covered had been determined, two instructional meth ds were decided upon. Group 1 was instructed via the traditional lecture and grammar drill technique while Group

2 was instructed via the editing approach. Methodology for Group 1 consisted of a classroom lecture and explanation focusing on how to form and when to use noun plurals and of grammar exercises focusing on these same processes. These exercises and rules were reviewed. No instruction giving editing a place in the writing process was given nor were grammar drills focused on any aspect of editing. Methodology used for Group 2 consisted of an editing approach to provide instruction on the skill. Students were familiarized with noun plural forms through a lecture in which correct examples were provided followed by incorrect versions (taken from sample papers) which the students were to edit. This revision or editing procedure was emphasized as a step to be taken at the end of the writing process after all ideas had been expressed. Later, an exercise consisting of a student theme containing only noun plural errors was administered and reviewed.

After lectures were completed and exercises gone over with each group, a 30-minute writing assignment consisting of the same two topics for each group was administered. Group 1 was given the writing topics and instructed to choose one and write a paragraph. Group 2 was given the same instructions and was in addition asked to proofread after all writing had been completed, making sure to edit for grammar errors such as those of noun plurals in much the same way that they had for the editing exercise.

After this second set of papers was submitted by the students, a second error analysis was conducted. The results of this error analysis are summarized in the following table.

Table 2: Comparison of Groups' Performance

	Before Instruction		
	Total # of instances	Avg. # of correct instances per paper	Avg. # of incorrect instances per paper
Group 1 Grammar Drill Approach	71	4	7
Group 2 Editing Approach	105	5	9

	After Instruction		
	Total # of instances	Avg. # of correct instances per paper	Avg. # of incorrect instances per paper
Group 1 Grammar Drill Approach	103	4	6
Group 2 Editing Approach	92	7	5

The results seem to reinforce the curriculum developers' assumptions that editing can help promote grammatical accuracy in writing tasks. The writing of the group instructed via the editing approach shows a greater increase in grammatical accuracy than that of the group instructed via the grammar drill approach.

B. DISCUSSION OF CLASSROOM RESEARCH RESULTS

Although it is not possible to generalize the results of this classroom research project to a universal population, it is important to note that there were differences in the performance of the two groups selected. These differences reinforce the developers' premise that editing can help promote focus on form; student compositions show more improvement in grammatical accuracy with the editing method than the grammar drill approach. Even though students who received instruction in the form of grammar drills did not improve as much as those instructed via the editing method, there was some improvement. This seems to indicate that grammar drill instruction is not detrimental.

III. IMPLICATIONS

A. IMPLICATIONS FOR CLASSROOM TEACHERS

1. Since the monitor only operates with simple rules of the language, editing cannot be the cure-all for all the grammar deficiencies developmental students exhibit. Editing needs to be used **in conjunction with** sustained writing practice and comprehensible input through reading selections in order to encourage acquisition of the written code.

2. The best editing exercises to use in the classroom can come from student compositions; since the work is that of a peer, students are more likely to identify with the problems presented and to find relevance in the exercise.

3. Groups or student dyads that cooperate at correcting their own writing errors are very effective. Through them, students get practice in using the monitor and in reading their work and the work of others critically.

4. When focused on one skill at a time, editing exercises in textbooks can give students practice in using proofreading strategies that can be transferred to their own writing.

5. Sustained and orderly practice in writing compositions should be an essential part of classroom activities. Its effectiveness in transfer increases when papers are returned with problem areas highlighted (though not corrected) and students are asked to edit them -- sometimes alone and sometimes in groups.

6. It is important to emphasize editing as a step **at the end** of the writing process along with other composing techniques. This is important so that students do not become "monitor maniacs" whose fluency is impaired by an excessive concern with the possible errors they could make and also so that they incorporate self-correction of grammatical errors into the communicative task.

7. If editing is handled effectively, students can see their errors as manageable. They can see that errors occur in a pattern and are recognizable and correctable. Thus, students can become more aware of their patterns of language use, and as a result, they can more easily monitor their writing. This can help them have more confidence is themselves as writers.

8. Teachers should emphasize differences between speaking and writing and stress that all varieties of English such as Black Vernacular English and others are useful for certain contexts. It is in the context of formal writing that Standard American English is the most appropriate code.

B. IMPLICATIONS FOR MATERIAL DEVELOPERS

1. Skills to be covered in editing exercises should be arrived at via error analysis. Exercise items should resemble student errors as much as possible so that the exercises are relevant to the students.

2. Editing exercises should focus on simple rules of the language.

3. Skills should be presented one at a time in order to avoid confusion.

4. A minimum of terminology should be used when explaining grammar points so that concepts are portable and easy to understand.

5. Editing should be presented as a problem-solving activity.

6. Materials should teach through contrast of standard and non-standard forms, doubly reinforcing the standard forms.

7. Editing exercises should begin with sentence-level errors and build to longer passages; they should move from identification tasks to more communicative tasks such as revising an unmarked theme.

8. Materials should introduce editing strategies and should present all varieties of English as useful and appropriate for different contexts.

9. The assumption made by some researchers that students will, through a habit established by practice in linguistic manipulation (grammar drills), begin to produce the standard forms without having to wrestle with error does not appear to be a sound perception of the writing process. Students, like professional writers, need to become used to the idea of not being satisfied with a first draft and of refining and reading their own writing critically, including for correction of grammatical or mechanical errors.

C. IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. The effects of editing on tranfer of grammatical skills to student writing should be further investigated.

2. Editing methodology should be contrasted with input methods and assessed in conjunction with them and others.

3. Long-term effects of editing methodology should be measured.

4. Students' attitudes toward editing exercises should be explored.

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